

POLICY REGARDING ELECTRONIC DEVICES  
IN COURTHOUSES OF THE U. S. DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

The following policy shall govern the possession and use of electronic devices in all of the United States Courthouses in the Middle District of Georgia, to-wit:

PROHIBITED ITEMS

Except as hereinafter specifically authorized, the following items may not be brought into the courthouses: cellular telephones with or without cameras, pagers, wireless e-mail devices such as the Blackberry or Treo, audio and video tape recorders, DVD recorders, cameras, personal digital assistants (PDAs) such as the Palm Pilot, lap-top computers, and all similar devices capable of communicating by wire or otherwise, from and to the courthouses.

Notwithstanding the exceptions hereinafter set out, under no circumstances shall any electronic devices be utilized to photograph, broadcast, or transmit judicial proceedings or to conduct audio or video recordings of judicial proceedings, whether these proceedings are held in open court or in the chambers of a judge of this court.

EXCEPTIONS

1. Judges of this court, law enforcement officers having official business within the courthouse facility, and attorneys (including any attorney in the office of the United States Attorney or the Federal Defenders Office) and their staffs shall be permitted to bring electronic devices, including laptop computers, hand-held devices such as Blackberries and PDAs, and telephones, with or without cameras, into the courthouses, subject to screening by court security personnel.

2. Cellular telephones may be carried into courtrooms and chambers by these individuals but must be turned off at all times. Laptop computers may be utilized during court proceedings as authorized by the judge presiding over the proceedings. Wireless e-mail/calendar services may be used in the courtrooms, provided that any audible ring tone or chime must be turned off or disabled. Wireless e-mail/calendar devices may be set to "vibrate." Nothing herein shall prohibit the use of electronic devices in the presentation of evidence at any trial or hearing as authorized by the judge presiding over that trial or hearing.

3. Cellular telephones may be used in the courthouses by authorized individuals outside the courtrooms, provided they do not interfere with or otherwise cause a disruption of court proceedings. Use of cellular telephones in the hallways and conference rooms may be restricted by court security personnel for security reasons, subject to review by a district judge of this court

4. Federal court employees and employees of the General Services Administration shall be permitted to possess cellular telephones while in the courthouse, subject to screening by court security personnel.

5. Court security personnel may bar from the courthouse any device that appears to pose a threat to the security, safety or integrity of judicial proceedings.

6. Members of the general public, including those summoned to court as jurors, grand jurors or witnesses, may NOT bring any electronic devices into the courthouses and shall be directed to leave such devices at home or in their vehicles prior to requesting entrance into the courthouse facility.

7. Specifically excluded from application of the foregoing policy are offices of elected officials within any United States courthouse in this district or offices or areas of other governmental agencies or related agencies (such as the U. S. Postal Service) within such courthouse buildings where photography, broadcasting, and recording have been invited or authorized by the person in charge thereof with respect to matters which are unrelated to court proceedings or security.

8. The foregoing policy may be suspended for naturalization or other ceremonial or educational proceedings in the discretion of the Clerk of Court or any judge of this court.

9. The foregoing policy shall not apply to official court reporters in the performance of their official duties. Any use of audio or video recording or transcription services or equipment other than by the official court reporters must be approved by the presiding judge.

*Effective March 12, 2008.*

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